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Helms' Exit Linked To Kissinger Rift

By OSWALD JOHNSTON
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The impending resignation of Richard M. Helms as the nation's top intelligence officer can in large part be traced to a serious and continuing policy disagreement with Henry A. Kissinger, according to informed sources in the intelligence community.

The disagreement reportedly began with Helms' position in 1969 on a key intelligence issue — whether the Soviet Union, with its giant SS-9 missile, was going for a "first-strike capability." Helms took the less alarmed view.

Helms' departure, which has been confirmed by authoritative sources in the administration, has not been announced publicly pending a decision by the Central Intelligence Agency head to accept another position.

It is understood the new position will involve the foreign policy field and will be presented publicly as a promotion for the 59-year-old Helms, who has been involved in intelligence work ever since World War II.

Role Was Expanded

But insiders already are voicing skepticism that any job outside the intelligence field could be anything but a comedown for Helms, who is believed to have been anxious to stay on as CIA chief.

A key element in this view is the belief within the intelligence community that Helms had lost the confidence of the White House—Kissinger especially.

"Kissinger felt that Helms wasn't so much trying to support the administration as playing politics on his own—trying to keep his constituency together in the intelligence establishment," one source explained.

In all outward respects, however, Helms appeared to have been given President Nixon's full confidence, expressed both in public statements and in Helms' assignment just a year ago to a position of broadened responsibility in intelligence.

As a result of a sweeping reorganization of the intelligence community in November 1971, Helms' official title, Director of Central Intelligence, was expanded to include new budgetary and organizational authority over the whole \$5 billion a year U.S. intelligence effort.

The origin of Kissinger's dissatisfaction with Helms is said to reside in an incident, early in 1969, in which Helms made an intelligence assessment involving a fundamental question of national security that was sharply at odds with the view advanced by Pentagon

intelligence experts and held privately in the White House.

The incident was one of those rare occurrences when the latent disagreements in the intelligence community surfaced publicly, in this case in the persons of two rival chieftans, Helms himself and Melvin R. Laird, secretary of Defense.

At issue were the massive Soviet SS-9 intercontinental ballistic missiles, whose existence as a new weapon in the Soviet arsenal became known to intelligence early in the administration's first year.

Laird testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the new missiles, which are capable of carrying a much heavier payload than anything deployed previously, meant that the Soviet Union was going for a "first strike capability."

About the same time, Helms let it be known that in his assessment the new missiles did not indicate a shift from the traditional emphasis on defense, and that the smaller Minuteman-style SS-11 would remain the backbone of the Soviet strategic missile arsenal.

Judgement Was Key

Later, in June 1969, both men appeared together before the committee in executive session, and their views were in some part reconciled. Helms is said to have deferred to the administration view, while the Pentagon's intelligence assessment, championed by Laird, was the

one on which to base policy.

The administration has subsequently based some of its fundamental decisions in the nuclear strategy and national security fields upon that intelligence judgement. They include: ABM, whether to go ahead with rapid development of multiple missile warheads, and basic negotiating positions in the strategic arms control talks with the Soviets.

The Soviet Union has now clearly shifted to the SS-9 as its basic strategic weapon, and in this respect Helms' assessment appears in retrospect to have been wrong.

According to insiders, there have been other incidents, similar but less spectacular, likewise involving an assessment of Soviet strategic capability in which Helms and the Pentagon were at odds. In most of these, sources say, Kissinger has sided with the Defense Department.

The leading candidate to replace Helms is authoritatively reported to be James R. Schlesinger, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and a chief architect of a study that shaped the intelligence reorganization.

NEW JOB CONSIDERED

CIA Chief Helms To Leave Post

AEC Boss Eyed As Successor

By OSWALD JOHNSTON
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✓ Richard M. Helms will step down as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, high administration officials said yesterday.

This disclosure came amid indications that Helms, 59, has been offered another major assignment in the second Nixon administration and is still considering it.

Helms could not be reached for comment and high-ranking CIA officials who were reached late yesterday said they had no information about Helms' plans to step down or a possible replacement.

Official announcement of Helms' departure is being delayed while he considers an opportunity offered him by President Nixon to assume another high-level position, it is understood.

The exact nature of the new assignment possibility could not be ascertained. It was assumed it would involve the foreign policy field, in view of Helms' background.

Rumors that Helms would be stepping down have been prevalent for several weeks.

✓ Helms was named director of the CIA in 1966 by President Lyndon Johnson. He had been a top figure in the agency under Allen Dulles and John A. McCone.

He was a newspaperman in Europe before World War II, and worked for the Office of

Strategic Services during and after the war. He joined the CIA at its inception in 1947.

He has been thought of as well regarded by Nixon as the nation's most experienced intelligence officer. Slightly more than a year ago his office was widely expanded in responsibility in a sweeping reorganization of the U.S. intelligence community.

The leading candidate under consideration to succeed Helms, authoritative sources indicate, is James R. Schlesinger, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and one of the chief architects of the intelligence reorganization.

The reorganization mandate made public by the White House in November 1971 gave Helms new authority to oversee the consolidated budget of the American foreign intelligence effort — variously estimated at \$5 billion to \$6 billion a year.

Schlesinger was assistant director of the Office of Management and Budget when plans to reorganize the intelligence establishment were first devised, and much of the planning was worked out by the OMB early in 1971.

The plan's main thrust was to coordinate the complicated and at times self-contradictory U.S. intelligence effort and place the separate establishments at the CIA, in the Defense Department, in the sepa-

rate uniformed services and in the State Department under one head.

When Helms was designated to fill this position it was widely supposed that the budgetary authority the new plan gave him would empower him not only to bring the rival intelligence establishments under control, but also to cut the aggregate cost of their operations by \$1 billion.

The extent to which this reorganization has succeeded during the year since it was announced is unclear.

The cost of intelligence gathering is still largely secret and the results of Nixon's move for economy in this field are not clearly known.

There has been little outward organizational change in the intelligence community. There have been many indications, however, that the sharp and bitter rivalry among the separate branches has been sharpened since Helms stepped into his enhanced leadership role.

To insiders, the latent rivalry between the CIA and the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency has never been more bitter than during the past year. Helms has been a particular target of Pentagon intelligence experts ever since he contradicted their view that the Soviet Union was deploying a massive new missile sys-

tem designed for a nuclear first strike.

Well-informed sources in the defense and intelligence establishments have been looking to Schlesinger as a possible successor to Helms for a variety of reasons.

His close association with the reorganization is, probably, paramount. But there is also the factor that Schlesinger was a colleague of Andrew M. Marshall during his stint at the Rand Corporation. Marshall, as a result of the reorganization has become the ranking intelligence watchdog on the White House staff.

Schlesinger had been named for a promotion in the Nixon administration in March 1971 when his work on the reorganization plan was still in progress. At that time he had been picked for a ranking position in the Department of Interior, but the appointment was blocked by the opposition of Western senators who wanted a more obedient regional representative.

In July 1971 Schlesinger was picked for the top job at AEC.

Schlesinger was with one of the first groups of administration officials to call on Nixon at Camp David during his second-term reorganization deliberations. Schlesinger went there Nov. 21 — by coincidence, perhaps, just a day after Helms' own visit to the presidential retreat.



Victor Zorza

Reports of Rift Interest Soviets

THE KREMLIN is trying to find out what truth there is in the Washington stories of a falling-out between President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger over the Vietnam peace settlement. Soviet agents in Washington have been making discreet inquiries about the report, which first appeared in an ultra-conservative Washington weekly, Human Events, and was then briefly reproduced in The Washington Post.

Human Events said that Kissinger had tried "to foist" the Paris agreement on Mr. Nixon. There followed "a bitter dispute" among top officials and second thoughts "even in the White House," about the agreement Kissinger had negotiated, the paper said. The Washington Post, however, reported that White House officials had scoffed at such rumors.

Faced with a White House mystery, Soviet analysts would attempt the kind of exercise that the CIA makes to find out what goes on in the Kremlin. Only Soviet officials call it Washingtonology, not Kremlinology.

KISSINGER HAD SAID that only "minor" issues remained to be resolved. But Mr. Nixon spoke later of "central" issues. Kissinger had said that only one more negotiating session would suffice. But the White House spokesman later spoke of several. Was there a genuine disagreement in the White House, the Kremlin would ask, or had Mr. Nixon simply changed his mind?

Washingtonology, when practiced from a Soviet vantage point, has one advantage. It is not limited to Washington information, but can be supplemented with insights from the other side of the fence. Why, for instance, did Hanoi press for an immediate cease-fire some time before the election? "Hanoi had to ask Hanoi," said Kissinger.

The answer is not simply that Hanoi thought it could get better terms before the election than after. Once Hanoi had decided, by late summer, to accept Mr. Nixon's major demands, it concentrated its efforts on the next most important negotiating objective: to prevent the rearming of the South Vietnamese forces, to the point where they could become a threat to the regime in the North.

Mr. Nixon called it "Vietnamization," but a Saigon army made strong enough to defeat the Communists in the South might also, Hanoi would have reason to fear, be capable of marching on the North. Mr. Nixon kept telling Hanoi that it must choose between "Vietnamization," thus subtly redefined, and a "negotiated settlement," also redefined to include major Communist concessions.

MOSCOW AND PEKING got the message, and kept urging it on a reluctant Hanoi. After the election, they would have argued, even this choice might disappear, because Mr. Nixon would no longer be under pressure to seek a settlement. Hanoi accepted the bargain. The Paris agreement stipulated that the flow of American arms was to end on November 1 — and, with it, the threat of Vietnamization.

So the reason why Hanoi had been pressing for an immediate cease-fire, even before the election, was to avert a massive last-minute surge in the flow of arms which would nullify its concessions. When Mr. Nixon rejected the Paris draft, and used the time thus gained to do the very thing which Hanoi had paid so dearly to avert, the Communists claimed that they had been cheated out of the bargain they made in good faith.

The reason why Moscow wants to know whether Kissinger intended this all along, or was overruled by Mr. Nixon, or whether, perhaps, it was a last-minute twist forced on the White House by a genuine change in circumstances, far transcends in importance the immediate issue of peace in Vietnam, important as that is.

What Moscow is asking is whether it can trust Mr. Nixon in the "era of negotiations," and whether it can really march arm-in-arm with him toward the "generation of peace." The White House cannot afford to leave the Kremlin with the wrong impression.

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